

occidentalis (*Parus leucopterus*, Swains.) cum speciminibus orientalibus omnino conveniunt.

5. MELANIPARUS FUNEREUS, J. et E. Verr. Journ. für Orn. 1865, p. 104.

Hab. in Gaboon (*Verreaux*).

6. MELANIPARUS RUFIVENTRIS (Bocage), Journ. Sc. Math. Phys. e Natur. n. xxii. (Extracto, p. 20) (1822).

Hab. in Angola (*Anchieta*).

XXV.—On the Systematic Position and Scientific Name of "*Le Perroquet mascarin*" of Brisson. By W. A. FORBES, M.B.O.U. &c.

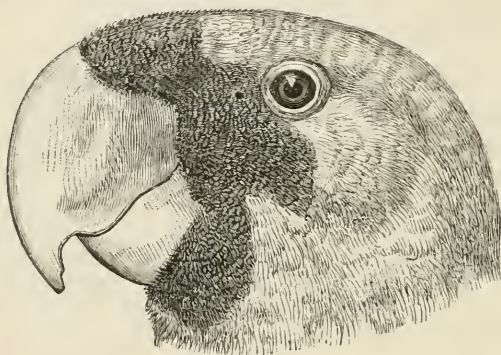
DURING a visit to Paris last autumn in company with Mr. Selater and Dr. Hartlaub, I had an opportunity of seeing for the first time, in the gallery of the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes, one* of the two sole extant specimens of "*Le Perroquet mascarin*" of Brisson, the "*Coracopsis mascarina*" of most authors. This specimen is not improbably that described by Brisson, and is still in a fair state of preservation, though its wings and tail are rather damaged. On seeing it I was at once struck with several points in which it differed conspicuously from the other species usually placed in the genus *Coracopsis*; and after my return to England, at my request, Prof. Alphonse Milne-Edwards was kind enough to have life-sized sketches of the head and foot of this specimen made for me, which are here reproduced, all the figures we have of this species being more or less reduced in size. As will be seen from the drawing (fig. 1, p. 304), the beak in this species is very large and deep, not so compressed and elongated as in *Psittacus* or *Coracopsis*, but more like in shape that of a large-billed species of *Tanygnathus* or *Palæornis*. Moreover the beak is red†, as in most of the species of the two last-named genera; whereas in *Psittacus* or *Coracopsis* it is black, or

* The other is in the Vienna Museum (*cf.* Pelzeln, *Ibis*, 1873, p. 32).

† Du Bois (*cf.* *Ibis*, 1876, p. 286) calls it "couleur de feu."

dirty white. The head is fully feathered*, the frontal plumes covering the cere, so that the nostrils are concealed by them.

Fig. 1.



Head of *Mascarinus duboisi*.

The lores also are fully feathered, and there is only a narrow circumorbital ring left naked. In all the species of *Coracopsis* the cere is large and conspicuous, being quite bare of feathers, there is a large nude circumorbital ring, and, particularly in *C. vasa*, the lores are sparingly feathered†. In *Psittacus* the cere and nostrils are equally conspicuous, and the lores and cheeks even more sparingly feathered.

The feet (figs. 2, 3) differ from those of *Coracopsis* in their shorter and thicker tarso-metatarsi and shorter nails. Prof. Alphonse Milne-Edwards extracted the lower mandible from the stuffed specimen in the gallery of the Museum, and has figured it in his article on the various forms of that bone in the different groups of Parrots‡. He says that it differs

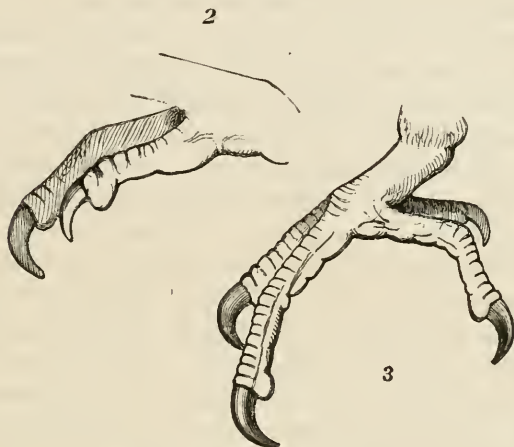
* The figures, both of D'Aubenton (Pl. Enl. 35) and Levaillant (Hist. Nat. Perr. ii. pl. 139 [1805]), show a red beak, narrow naked orbital ring, and feathered lores and cere. Hahn's figure does the same; but Wagler says the cere was uncovered (*cf.* Finsch, Pap. ii. p. 297).

† Wagler, who founded the genus *Coracopsis* (Abh. Math. Phys. Akad. Mun. i. p. 501, 1832), says, in his characters of the genus, "*Rostrum basi cerâ latâ nudâ cinctum nares maxime, patulæ Pili in loris et prope nares.*"

‡ Ann. Sci. Nat. Zool. 5^{me} série, vol. vi. p. 105, t. ii. fig. 4, and t. iii. fig. 8, 1866.

markedly from that of the species of *Coracopsis*, and perhaps more nearly resembles that of the genus *Chrysotis* than any

Figs. 2 & 3.



Feet of *Mascarinus duboisi*.

other. It is not at all related to the mandible of *Lophopsittacus*.

From these considerations it is, I think, clear that the "Perroquet mascarin" is not related closely to *Coracopsis*, but must be referred to another genus. It is also clear that, of the two species, *C. mascarina* and *C. nigra*, for which Wagler (*l. s. c.*) founded the genus *Coracopsis*, the latter must be considered the type, as it alone agrees with several of the generic characters he gives as diagnostic*.

Lesson, in 1831 (*Traité d'Orn.* p. 188), founded a genus *Mascarinus*, characterized, amongst other things, by "*narines cachées par les plumes sur le bord du front*," in which he included, besides the present bird, two species of *Eclectus* and a *Tanygnathus*. *Mascarinus* is obviously a Latinized form of the epithet "*mascarin*;" and although an *Eclectus* is men-

* It is, indeed, doubtful, on reading some parts of Wagler's diagnosis of the genus (*e. g.* "*Nares maximæ, patulæ . . . Plumæ corvinæ*," &c.), whether he had, at that time, seen a specimen of *C. mascarina*.

tioned first in the list of species included, there can be little doubt that in reality Lesson had in view, when he made the genus, the bird at present under discussion, which must therefore be considered the type of *Mascarinus*.

As regards the specific name, at various times three names have been proposed for, or applied to, this bird—*mascarinus* of Brisson (Orn. iv. p. 315, 1760, "*Psittacus mascarinus*"), *madagascariensis* of Lesson (Traité, p. 189, 1831, "*Mascarinus madagascariensis*"), and *obscurus* of Linnæus (S. N. i. p. 140, 1766, "*Psittacus obscurus*"). If the bird is to be placed in a genus *Mascarinus*, the first of these specific names obviously cannot be applied. As regards the second, we already know from the Messrs. Newtons' excellent article on the Mascarene *Psittaci* (Ibis, 1876, p. 285) that there is no evidence to show that the "Masearin" ever occurred elsewhere than in Bourbon, and hence "*madagascariensis*" is equally inapplicable. The *Psittacus obscurus* of Linnæus was founded on the description of a Parrot in captivity observed by Hasselquist during his travels in the east (Iter Pal. p. 236, 1757), and about which no subsequent information has ever been obtained. Hasselquist's description does not fit any species of Parrot at present known, and certainly not *Mascarinus*; and as Linnæus's diagnosis, "*Psittacus macrourus, fuscus, genis nudis rubris, vertice cinereo-nigrescente vario, cauda cinerea*" (S. N. i. p. 140, 1766), is equally inapplicable, the name "*obscurus*" had better be relegated to the region of mysteries, and entirely dropped*.

This being the case, there is no other course open than to use a new specific name; and, at Prof. Newton's suggestion, I propose that of *duboisii*, in memory of the French voyager Du Bois, who visited Madagascar and Bourbon in 1669–72,

* Linnæus, indeed, quotes *Psittacus mascarinus* of Brisson as a synonym of his *P. obscurus*; but the words "*capistrum nigrum*," after the diagnosis, as well as "*genis nudis rubris*," about which Hasselquist, in his very lengthy description, says nothing—so that they are probably only a paraphrase of Brisson's phrase "*oculorum ambitu nudo, coccineo*,"—suggest that his diagnosis was compounded by grafting on part of Brisson's diagnosis an abstract of Hasselquist's description.

and described the various Parrots observed by him on the latter island, including one which is clearly the present bird (*cf.* Ibis, *l. c.* p. 286).

As regards the systematic position of *Mascarinus duboisi*, the available material is so scanty that we shall probably never (for the bird is certainly extinct) be able to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion about it. In the form of the beak, the feathered nostrils and lores, the narrow orbital ring, and the structure of its feet, it more resembles the genera *Tanygnathus* and *Palæornis* than any of the African genera of Parrots now existing (*Psittacus*, *Coracopsis*, *Pæocephalus*, and *Agapornis*); and the forms of the wings and tail point to a similar conclusion. In its general coloration it is decidedly aberrant; but the fact of its beak being red is also a confirmation of its Palæornithine affinities, Prof. Garrod having shown (*P. Z. S.* 1874, p. 598) that none* but species with normal carotids (a group including *Palæornis*, *Tanygnathus*, &c., but not *Coracopsis*, *Psittacus*, and *Pæocephalus*) have their beaks so coloured. We already know that in both Mauritius and Rodriguez a very different genus† of Parrots existed in each island, along with a species of *Palæornis*, and therefore there is no *primâ facie* reason against a similar state of things having also been the case in Bourbon. On the other hand there is no evidence that *Coracopsis* ever occurred in a state of nature on any of these three islands.

To briefly recapitulate, then, I submit:—

(1) That the “*Perroquet mascarin*” of Brisson belongs to a genus, *Mascarinus*, distinct from *Coracopsis*.

(2) That, failing any older name that can with propriety be applied to it, it may be termed *Mascarinus duboisi*.

(3) That, so far as can be judged from the material that exists, *Mascarinus* is allied rather to such Palæornithine genera as *Palæornis* and *Tanygnathus* than to *Psittacus*, *Coracopsis*, or allied forms.

Cambridge, May 8, 1879.

* *Pionus corallinus* is the only exception to the above rule that I have yet met with.

† *Lophopsittacus* and *Necropsittacus*.